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RURAL AREAS DEVELOPMENT

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newsletter

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THE PEOPLE SPEAK AT LAND & PEOPLE CONFERENCES

*We must show the
world what a
free economy can do
... to put unused
capacity to work,
spur new
productivity and
foster higher
economic growth.*

President Kennedy.

When Secretary Freeman announced the Land and People Conferences, he made particular note of having the local people express their ideas, their comments, and their opinions on what can be done to revitalize rural America, through the Rural Areas Development program. Throughout each one of the five regional conferences the Secretary stressed this idea of "local response."

And the local people did respond -- over 10,000 of them turned out -- and many of them were vocal, too.

Comments came from farmers like Al Agustin of Sherman County, Nebraska, who reported that the people in his home area had developed 56 projects, but that the main success of the RAD program as far as he was concerned was "the way it cut across local factions and developed a better understanding between the businessmen and the farmers of the community." And, adds Mr. Agustin, "our efforts at rural areas development have slowed to a considerable degree the amount of farm sales in our area. Today, we really have to search to find a farm sale to go to."

Other farmers like H. H. Harville of Humphrey, Arkansas, pointed out that conservation and recreation go hand in hand in many areas. "One promotes the other," Harville said. A good conservation project, one which concerns water, helps wildlife and thus indirectly promotes recreation, providing an opportunity for the fellow on Main Street.

And there were many suggestions, too, for revitalizing our rural areas such as this one from Raymond Johnson of Lingle, Wyo.: "We need to educate all people to what our farm problems and our farm programs are and mean."

Or, this one from Ted Jamison, a Sioux Indian from North Dakota: "We need constructive not destructive thinking." Jamison also noted that a successful RAD program must of itself begin with the local people. The Indians on his reservation banded together,



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Growth Through Agricultural Progress

planned a course of action and brought new developments into their area, such as better education, needed family housing, and a livestock program. "We took about 35 of our young men off the town streets and put them back on our farms and ranches," Jamison added. This was after the people acted.

The women, though fewer in numbers, were as outspoken as the men when it came to what is needed to rebuild our rural areas. Mrs. Wayne C. Mark, mother of four, and farm wife of Cedar Falls, Iowa, was concerned with keeping youth on the farms. She pointed out that there is need of better education to bring income and more opportunities for rural youth to stay in farming. "There is still plenty of need for farmers and farm oriented people in this country," the rural homemaker declared.

Mrs. G. M. Haas, a city housewife of Mobile, Ala., and a girl scout leader, called for a program to develop leadership among today's youth to handle tomorrow's responsible jobs.

Still others had differing ideas of what rural America needs if it is to have new income and new prosperity. Gene Linnemann, assistant manager of the Wheat Belt Public Power district, Sidney, Neb., said that "an increase in farm income is not the answer to all the ills of rural America." According to Linnemann, what is required is more employment opportunities.

"What we need in rural areas are small manufacturers, small commercial enterprises and businesses, which are agriculture related." Linnemann gave an example: "One man in our area builds tractor and combine cabs and hires a few of his farm neighbors. He built over 200 last year. He recently got a loan from the Small Business Administration and plans to expand production to cover 1,000 a year. He will eventually employ 15 persons."

Ross Chambers of Eagle, Colo., remarked that each area has its own particular problems and needs, and what may help one region may not help another. Chambers explains that in his area a ski lift has done much to increase employment and area income. Besides providing direct jobs, the recreational enterprise stimulated employment in area restaurants, motels, and service enterprises.

Women from the business world were also in evidence at these nationwide conferences and expressed their viewpoints. Miss Pat Dickerman, of New York City, associated with a farm-vacation organization said: "Any farm family with a couple of spare rooms, willing to have visitors, can get started in the farm-vacation business." And added Miss Dickerson, "this does wonders for promoting better farm-city understanding."

Mrs. Horace Waybright, wife of a Gettysburg, Pa., dairy farmer remarked that she was most happy to hear that the Department of Agriculture was working toward the preservation of the family farm. "Our farm has been in the family for 150 years. We are the 7th generation to live here. And we want to keep on farming."

As to the general feeling about the conferences, and to what can come from them in rebuilding rural areas, probably Herb Good, an educator from Panama City, Fla., summed it up best when he said: "We have the people. We have the resources. We have the tools. All we need is the know-how to put them together."